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SKIP TO
NEXT
ARTICLE

1/5

National
Entertainment

One-on-one interview with Grammy Award- winning singer Anthony Hamilton in Chicago

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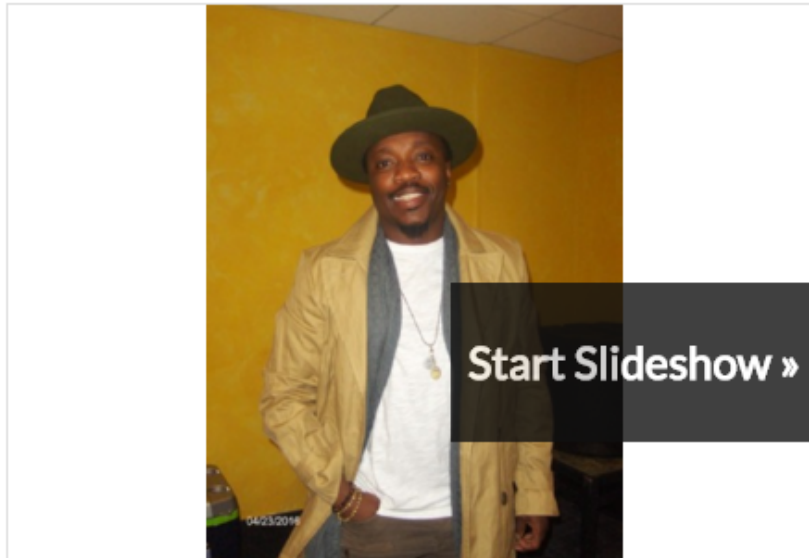
Regardless of how laid-back and soulful Anthony Hamilton's music is, Hamilton himself is a bit of a jokester. Riding up in a wheelchair, after surgery on Mon., April 18, from a meniscus tear in his knee, he still greeted everyone cheerfully. With handshakes, hugs and greetings of "Waddup doe?" he had no problems moving his way around Chicago's Arie Crown Theatre before he and his background singers, The Hamiltones, were set to perform on Sat., April 23.

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SKIP TO
NEXT
ARTICLE
- 1/5



After his Meet n' Greet with an exclusive group of 100 or so fans, he took time to speak with Sun Times Network's Shamontiel L. Vaughn. With a mischievous grin on his face, he started off by telling Vaughn that the interview better "put some respect on my name." Fans of New York's *The Breakfast Club* knew his joke was in reference to the [shortest interview ever with Cash Money's Baby](#).

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Check out: "Anthony Hamilton, Fantasia team up to bring funk and soul to Chicago"



After cracking up, the two settled in to talk about everything from what song President Barack Obama knows will get him out of trouble with first lady Michelle Obama, Hamilton's new CD "What I'm Feeling," his past as a background singer for D'Angelo and how he's handling his

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SKIP TO
NEXT
ARTICLE

1/5

Hamilton's new CD "What I'm Feeling," his past as a background singer for D'Angelo and how he's handling his newfound single life.

Shamontiel Vaughn: What will we get that's new from "What I'm Feeling" that we haven't gotten from your past albums?

AH: Actually the cohesiveness with the same producer, Mark Batson. The skills that Mark Batson and I bring together, I think are, very unique. My engineer, the way he captures my voice, is very unique. Bruce Irvine. I think there's a lot more heavier-influenced blues songs on the track, on the album, and also really nice country, country song on this album. And an '80s record, "Ever Seen Heaven."

SV: I saw your [Spotify favorite playlist](#), and I want you to know ahead of time, that there is nobody else who can see "The Point of It All" more off-key than me.

AH: (Laughs) OK.

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SV: And you need to know that because that's my favorite song ever. But I notice that was not on your favorites list. I saw people like Jodeci, New Edition, Earth Wind & Fire, The Winans and Marvin Gaye, and so forth. But do you have anybody from this generation's R&B that you are really really into? Or, are you more into the oldies?

AH: No, I love, I'm a today's R&B lover. Hip-Hop. Man, it's so many. I love what BJ the Chicago Kid is doing. Ro James. Miguel. Jazmine Sullivan. So many great ... Chris Brown is very talented. What's the Jonas Brother? "Jealous." Nick Jonas. Yeah, I love his voice. Timberlake. You have so many.

SV: You have a few of your own songs on the Spotify list. Do you have a favorite song of yours? Is one your favorite song overall? And two, what song do you like to perform the most?

AH: You know what? "Comin' From Where I'm From" is one of my favorite songs to perform. I think it was the first time that I had the ability to open my book and let the world hear what my life had been like. To perform?

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1/5

I like "Soul's on Fire." I love performing that one. "Ain't Nobody Worryin'" I love performing that one. "The Point of It All" is always beautiful.

SV: Are you going to perform that tonight?

AH: I can't tell you.

SV: All right, fine, be that way.

AH: [Laughs]

[Editor's Note: [Click here](#) or the video above to find out if he did.]

AH: And "Who's Lovin' You?" I like that song a lot.

SV: I won't get too much into it because I know you're freshly divorced, and people like to remind you of that ...

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It's only an anecdote, and people like to remind you of that in



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NEXT
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1/5

AH: She reminds me. She sings with Fantasia.

SV: I heard! And you told her to not come to your room because you might remember.

[Both laugh.]

SV: On "Sway in the Morning," you said if a woman meets you now she's got to be happy first before she tries to date you. What made you come to that conclusion?

AH: Because you meet a lot of people with a lot of baggage. You know, when you have a lot going on, you've been through a lot. You want a fresh start. I don't want to bring a lot of heavy baggage to you, and I don't want you to bring a lot of heavy baggage to me. If we just so happen that we gel and it's a really strong bond, then you have to make the choice at that moment whether you want to dive into it or not. I don't want a bunch of heaviness. I've had a lot of loss, a lot of situations in my life.

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SKIP TO
NEXT
ARTICLE

1/5

SV: You did say in a previous interview that you would get married again. I've noticed, and I'm not going to say this is always the case because there are single people who can keep their private lives private, but I notice a certain pattern. It seems like married people tend to keep themselves out of the loop and out of tabloids. You got Denzel. You got Angela Bassett. You don't really hear much about Big Boi from Outkast.

AH: Omar Epps.

SV: It seems consistently that married men stay under wraps. Do you feel like it's harder to be single now? Or, do you still feel like you can keep yourself out of TMZ?

AH: It's about the choices you make. Listening to your instincts. God gives you this thing called intuition, and if you listen to it, he'll try to save you. He'll try to let you know. You have to be aware of the people you let in your space. The things you're doing. Being single you have the access to do whatever you want to. To a degree, there are still rules and values. When you're married, you don't have the freedom to do that stuff

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SKIP TO
NEXT
ARTICLE

1/5

degree, there are still rules and values. When you're married, you don't have the freedom to do that stuff. You shouldn't. Sometimes it happens, but you want to protect your family at all costs.

SV: You sang background for D'Angelo. And you also said you sang with Bilal. Did you sing background with Angie Stone, too, or did you come before her?

AH: Me and Angie Stone sang background a little bit toward the end of the "Brown Sugar" tour. And Bilal was a background singer for D'Angelo also at the end of the "Brown Sugar" tour.

SV: Of course D'Angelo has had his moments where he was totally out of the limelight and then totally in the limelight. What would you say was the biggest lesson you learned from being a background singer and from him?

AH: The biggest lessons I've learned from being a background singer were, what it takes. The hard work it takes to make the frontman, make it possible for him

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SKIP TO
NEXT
ARTICLE

1/5

background singer were, what it takes. The hard work it takes to make the frontman, make it possible for him to be his best. Make him sound amazing. The elements to put into a live show that gives the overall night, those things that stand out. Learning how to blend your voice with other people and make it become one sound. I learned a lot from D'Angelo. I learned showmanship. I learned how to pick great musicians. I learned how to put a show together. I learned about energy and wilding out. I got that all from being on tour with him, when I run through, act crazy. I got that from being on tour with so many great musicians.

SV: Can you elaborate on the showmanship part?

AH: D'Angelo was a great showman. He gave great energy. He'd go out in the audience. He'd touch the people. He just was wild, and the whole band was wild and awesome. It allowed me to see that you don't have to be contained. You can really express what you're feeling inside.

SV: I have to ask this because this play is growing so much

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SKIP TO
NEXT
ARTICLE

1/5

SV: I have to ask this because this play is growing so much in popularity, and I'm hoping you're getting some shine off of it. People are going nuts over that Alexander Hamilton play, and they are getting you confused with that.

AH: Yeah, I've been called Alexander Hamilton! Heathcliff. I told this lady, "No, I'm Anthony Hamilton." [She said] "Same thing." It's not the same thing. Heathcliff is not the same thing as Anthony Hamilton.

SV: Heather B. said on "Sway in the Morning" that she felt like you were this generation's "negro spiritualist," which was wild in general. But I got where she was coming from, and she wore that Harriet Tubman shirt. How do you feel about Harriet Tubman being on the \$20 bill?

AH: I think she should be on all the damn money. All she went through. All the people she helped and saved. They should put her on every bridge.

SV: Do you feel any controversy about her being on the front and [Andrew Jackson] being on the back?

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SV: Do you feel any controversy about her being on the front and [Andrew Jackson] being on the back?



SKIP TO
NEXT
ARTICLE

1/5

AH: It doesn't matter. Just give her her respect and honor her. Whoever's on the front or the back, it doesn't matter as long as she's on there. They should put her on the back and front, and [Jackson] can do something else.

SV: All right, is there anything that I haven't covered that you'd like covered before I end the interview?

AH: I sang at the White House two months ago for the Ray Charles tribute.

SV: What was it like meeting Obama?

AH: Amazing. He was real down to Earth. I had met Michelle Obama three times, but to meet Barack was pretty cool. Very historic moment. I enjoyed that.

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SKIP TO
NEXT
ARTICLE

1/5

SV: Did he have a favorite song of yours or did you all talk about that?

AH: Yes, when Michelle is mad at him he has to play "Float."

SV: What is his favorite song of yours when he's not in the doghouse?

AH: He loves my music, but just that, he said, "That's a bad song. That's got to be one of the baddest."

Float



Float

Anthony Hamilton

Comin' From Where I'm From